



It was Sister Mary Assumption's sense of humor that enthralled Sister Marie Clark and convinced her while she was in the third grade that she wanted to be a sister.

Sister Marie grew up in the little town of Roxborough, just outside Philadelphia, with her two younger brothers and parents. There were no Catholic schools in Roxborough, so she had to walk four miles a day to attend Holy Family School in Manayunk, where the IHMs taught. She then attended Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School, travelling by bus and trolley to get there.

At first she wanted to be a lay teacher but then decided she wanted to be like Sister Mary. "It was an inner conviction that this is where I belong. It felt very secure and right," she recalls. Her parents were very happy with her decision.

Sister Marie entered the Philadelphia IHMs right out of high school. She fondly remembers her charges while she was a postulant. Taking care of the elder sisters inspired and prepared her for the future.

Sister Marie taught at several different schools in Pennsylvania before making her final vows. During that time, she deepened her relationship with God.

"It's a closeness to God within myself. It's a kind of communication ... awareness that God is with me and I am with God," she reflects. She taught in Pennsylvania for another five years following final vows. After a two-month preparation, she went to Santiago, Chile, where she taught school during the week and religious education on weekends.

After three earthquakes (and worrying her mother for six years), Sister Marie returned home to teach seventh grade from February to June. She then ministered for 15 years at a number of high schools, teaching English and Spanish, supervising the yearbook and serving as activities director, principal and vice principal in Pennsylvania, Florida and New Jersey.

She took a leave of absence when her father died to care for her mother, who had had a stroke. After her leave, she went back to teaching while she discerned her future.

She transferred to the Monroe IHM community in 1988 and started working at St. Mary Conference Center. After nine years, Sister Marie took a sabbatical to Berakah in New Hampshire, where she "gained spiritual wings." She returned for a year to teach at St. Mary of Redford before ministering at a conference center in the foothills in Virginia. After nine months, she left for St. Jude and Immaculate Conception parishes in Mineral, Va., where she stayed for 13 years, ministering as pastoral associate/faith formator and spiritual director.

Sister Marie says she is most grateful for “my vocation, my love of God, my health, my energy, my love of people, my community and my discernment and decision to transfer to the Monroe IHMs.” Her greatest joy has been “teaching and interaction in community life, in both IHM communities.” She has enjoyed making things happen and looks forward to “growing in my love of God.”

